

## **Communications Guidelines**

This information is meant not as a formula, but as a guide to tying NOAA's value and mission to NOAA communications. The aim is to reflect accurately, effectively and consistently what NOAA is all about, whether in speeches, briefing/talking points, Congressional testimony, power points, press releases, or other presentations.

Regardless of the audience, these guidelines are flexible enough to be adapted to just about all of our communications. The most effective communications demonstrate how NOAA is addressing the needs/interests of the audience (s). They also underscore that NOAA's mission goals are being advanced and cite milestones. (See *New Priorities for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: NOAA's Strategic Vision*.)

The question: How does NOAA benefit the audience (s)? should be clear upfront and reinforced throughout the presentation. A presentation is not successful unless listeners/readers are clear about how NOAA is benefiting *their lives* and contributing socio-economically to *their* communities and society as a whole. Wherever possible, some economic data should be included. (Please use *NOAA Economic Statistics*.)

Inspiration is valuable, and just about all NOAA efforts offer the opportunity to inspire. As one example: *In many ways, we are still at the edge of a vast frontier – 200 million years of history lie on the still-largely unexplored sea floor. No doubt there are many not-even-yet-imagined treasures that will benefit humankind waiting to be discovered. When it comes to discovering and protecting them, every one of us is a stakeholder. Here's why:* (this can serve as a lead-in to much of NOAA's work)

### **Communication drivers:**

- *Upfront*, clearly link NOAA's *value* to audience interests.
- As applicable, weave in NOAA's 4 mission goals, making clear that milestone goals are being achieved. (See *New Priorities for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: NOAA's Strategic Vision*.)
- Weave in NOAA messages. (Please see below.)
- Whenever possible, recognize NOAA's research contributions.
- Less is usually better – have 1-3 clear themes and underscore each with audience-specific examples and a few reinforcing stats instead of piling on more themes.
- With most audiences, keep technical details, the "how" of process to a minimum.
- No acronyms/jargon with any audience (even within our own community), or you'll lose them.

**Key NOAA Messages:** (top 4 can be factored into everything; remaining messages can be adapted as useful). Please check that all data and other information are up-to-date before using.

- **NOAA, where science gains value** (main theme)
- **NOAA touches every one of our lives -- every day of the year.** Each day NOAA services touch at least \$3 trillion of America's economy. That's about 30% of our nation's GDP. (See *NOAA Economic Statistics*.)
- **Sound science is the basis of sound policy.** From the deep ocean to radiation from the surface of the sun, there is no part of our ocean and atmospheric environment that NOAA is not investigating and forecasting. *NOAA is there -- 24/7.* Via partnerships at all levels, NOAA's 12,000+ staff shape a public trust, in the atmosphere, the sky, over land and under the seas. Grounded in sound science, the aim is to foster a healthier environment and economy, now and for future generations.
- **To truly understand our planet, we must be able to take Earth's pulse everywhere it beats -- which is all over the globe.** Until we do, there will always be "blind spots" in understanding how Earth works. Merely listing the parts of a submarine or Boeing 777 won't tell us how they work. The same is true of systems on Earth.

Right now many thousands of individual pieces of technology are demonstrating great social and economic value around the globe. But many of these technological assets don't work in conjunction with each other. The promise of connecting them as an integrated global system designed to address critical societal needs is enormous. Imagine the safety and economic payoffs of knowing how severe next winter will be, and of being able to predict when and where the next outbreak of West Nile virus will hit. (See *Economics of Global Earth Observations*.)

For the benefit of all humankind, one integrated system will be able to observe globally, model regionally and act locally. On February 16, 2005, in Brussels, nearly 60 nations plus the European Commission adopted a 10-year global Earth Observation System implementation plan. Agreement has also been reached on a 10-year implementation plan for the U.S. (See <http://earthobservations.org>)

- **Since our planet's systems don't work in stovepipes, NOAA is being managed to move through the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the same interrelated manner as the environment we observe, forecast and protect.** This includes matrix teams that are citizen-centered, results-oriented and grounded in market-based principles. When it comes NOAA's priorities -- ecosystem-based management; climate; weather & water; and commerce & transportation -- there are now voices for a range of Earth sciences heard around one table. To sustain the environment and economy and understand our ever-changing world, there is need to understand the interrelationships among our planet's systems. (See *New Priorities for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: NOAA's Strategic Vision*.)

- **A matrix team on climate is one of the very first matrix teams established because climate is a top NOAA priority.** For the first time, the government has a comprehensive, 10-year federal interagency climate plan to develop products critical to policymakers, decision-makers and resource managers. There is now an unprecedented effort to manage climate research across 13 federal agencies. (See <http://www.climatescience.gov>)

**Additional bullets can be developed for frequently used themes tied to specific line office and matrix efforts...**as examples, here are two lead-ins to ocean, coastal, habitat, etc efforts:

- **If you've ever seen a U.S. coast, you can trust that NOAA is working to keep it healthy.** Along with many partners, NOAA is deeply engaged in our seas and along every coast. It's easy to take our seas for granted. They've kept us going for centuries, and helped shape the dreams of every civilization. But we can no longer ride the wave. We must get ahead of it – and that's what NOAA's scientists work so hard to do every day.
- **America depends on healthy coasts.** Coastal and marine waters support over 28 million jobs and generate more than \$54 billion annually in goods and services. And U.S. coasts are among our country's most vital and biological diverse treasures. Our coastal counties are growing three times faster than other U.S. counties. Every day of the year they are adding over 3,600 people to their populations. (tie data & other content to local interests, Earth observations, need to improve our understanding of the sea and how it connects to weather, climate, transportation, agriculture, energy, coastal zone planning/management, etc.)

**Why NOAA is where science gains value – examples of 5 snapshots:**

- **NOAA's PORTS, or Physical Oceanographic Real Time System, integrates real-time safety data in a way that mariners can access easily – in real-time.** And knowing actual water level conditions can yield significant economic pay-offs. Being able to add even one inch of ship draft could mean an added \$50,000 in cargo. Multiply that by the tens of thousands of vessels entering U.S. ports each year, and the economic impact is tremendous.
- **NOAA is gaining on the weather.** Warning lead times and rates of accuracy show a steady climb. Flash flood warnings, for example, are up from 22 minutes in 1993 to about 45 minutes today. Lead times for tornado warnings have increased from 6 minutes in 1993, to 11 minutes in 1998, to 12 minutes last year, to over 15 minutes since January. And today's five-day hurricane forecast is now as accurate as the former three-day forecasts.

- **NOAA research grants have yielded a vital new approach to predicting fire seasons in the western U.S. several months in advance.** Already operational, this groundbreaking ability to forecast wildfires over large parts of our country will play a key role in determining the resources required for effective fire management. The scientific advance addresses important NOAA goals, including improved longer-term climate forecasts and assessments to support sound management and policy decisions.

Scientists observed broad patterns in how climate drives wildfire outbreaks across different kinds of ecosystems. Studying 21 years of fire history, scientists found that, despite pervasive human influence, there is a striking link between wildfire outbreaks and climate. The economics can also be significant. Insured loss as a result of just the October 2003 California wildfires exceeded \$2 billion. With adequate crews and equipment in place, the gains could have been substantial. Even a 10 percent reduction in loss would have saved homeowners over \$200 million.

- **In announcing new technology to help the fishing community reduce accidental capture and harm to endangered sea turtles, NOAA has called on all nations to match U.S. efforts.** Working with the fishing community and private industry, NOAA has created turtle-friendly gear and fishing methods for use by commercial long-line vessels. By switching the type of hook and bait from the traditional “J”-style hook with squid to a large circle-style hook with mackerel, it is estimated that encounters with leatherback and loggerhead turtles can be reduced by up to 90 percent. This has the potential to boost swordfish revenues in the Grand Banks fishery shared by the U.S. and Canada by about 14 percent. Overall revenues in this area are expected to grow by about 4.5 percent. New minimal trauma release techniques from NOAA Fisheries can also boost the survival rates of turtles that are captured accidentally but can be released. A “leatherback lift” turtle elevator has even been designed so that larger turtles can be de-hooked aboard vessels.
- **New from NOAA is a first-class observing network that will give America better answers to changing climate.** The U.S. Climate Reference Network, a benchmark for monitoring climate for the next 50 to 100 years, will help federal and industry decision-makers shape policies that are affected by changes in our nation’s climate. Weather- and climate-sensitive industries account for about \$3 trillion, or one-third of this country’s GDP.

Now operating in 28 states with swift, affordable and new data points, this important network will fill a land-based gap in U.S. data and serve as a vital component of the emerging global Earth Observation System, a U.S.-led effort to connect many thousands of individual technological assets already demonstrating enormous social and economic value around the globe. Until this technology is connected, there will continue to be serious blind spots in our understanding of how Earth works -- 21st century technology must be as interrelated as the planet it observes, predicts and works to protect.

Reflecting how NOAA observes globally, models regionally and acts locally, the U.S. Climate Reference Network is expected to have a total of 100 stations by 2006. All stations will be located in fairly pristine environments to help eliminate human influences from affecting the interpretation of any observed changes in climate.